An Otome Game's Burikko Villainess Turned into a Magic Otaku Volume 5

Recuperating?

Chapter 1 - Q of Hearts (Part 1)

"Wiped out…"

I think this is the first time I've heard Royce-sama speak in such a low and hateful voice.
So he can speak in non-refreshing tones too.

"What's wrong, Royce-sama?"

"The soldiers that father sent to apprehend that girl were… wiped out. Moreover, the girl is currently on the run."

"Even though I said that I would gooo~."

It seems that the OP heroine is even more OP than expected. Even though there were talented magicians mixed in with the troops, they were still wiped out without a problem.

"Noo goood. Until you can control your magic power, I won't let you out."

Pulled back by arms that stretched out from behind me, I obediently settled into Achille's arms.
Even though I used to get so panicked… because I went through that summer vacation Homework Hell in his arms, I think I've got quite an immunity to it now.

"But, Achille…"

"Can you guarantee that you won't run out of magic power when facing that girl? And moreover, until His Highness gets permission, he can't make a move either."

"Uu… You're right."

The one that was most vexed right now was the currently pissed-to-the-max Royce-sama.

Using our time in recuperation …which is really just a pretext, at present we're not even going to class, and are gathered in the castle.
As usual, it's Royce-sama's room.
Since we had the time, we took the trip to the castle as a chance to have Achille teach me mana control.
I still haven't been able to control it much though… I mean, it's something that takes a lot of details. I'm bad at things that need precision in general.
But in order to face the Heroine, I have no choice but to do it. I don't feel in the slightest that I can beat her in mana volume, so there's no other way…
I have faith that piling up these little practices will become something meaningful.

After I died from feeling fed up with it, Achille threw into my mouth one of the pseudo-macarons that was on the plate on the table.

"Mn, sweet ♪"

I munched on it.
While I was in a daze because of the pseudo-macaron, Achille sat down on the sofa, still holding me in his arms.

"Hang on Achille, like this I can't mov-…"

“Do you want another?”

Achille brought another pseudo-macaron to my mouth…

“I do!”

In the end, I lost to the allure of the macaron.

While I was behaving, the conversation between Royce-sama and Achille progressed.

“Your Highness, regarding the reclamation of the town…”

“According to my father, it’ll be left to me. Ever since they failed to capture that girl the other day, I haven’t really been able to go on the offensive… Don’t you think this is a good chance?”

Leaning against the sofa opposite us, the boldly smiling Royce-sama looked a little bit like a villain.

“Yes, you have a point. Reclaiming the town will be convenient… However, the problem is what comes after.”

“Father and uncle are also really enthusiastic after all.”

Royce-sama smiled bitterly.

I don’t think that the relationship between His Majesty and Royce-sama is very risky.
But I wonder if His Majesty will become peevish about Royce-sama alone taking all of the best achievements. And while I’m at it, His Highness the Royal Prince as well.
This isn’t the time for internal disputes, but it seems that we need to pay attention to them as well.
It’s nothing but troublesome stuff, isn’t it? I feel sorry for Royce-sama to be stuck between these two things.
-munch munch-

Royce-sama and Achille continued their conversation further.

“There have always been people dissatisfied with the monarchy to begin with but… it feels like recently, the number of extremists has gone up all at once, huh…”

“It is a little unnatural, isn’t it.”

Having not seen how the extremist situation is going, I’m finding it hard to say anything though…

“If they used the magic that was cast on you Achille, they might be able to create some instant soldiers, huh.”

“…That would be the worst, wouldn’t it? In that case, would that mean that we have no choice but to attack people who are only guilty of being manipulated by forbidden arts?”

I don’t know how many people have been affected by forbidden arts, but it seems like it would be really really difficult if I had to dispel them all.
Even though I ended up in that state when it was just Claire.
Even if I try my best to save magic power, I would probably reach my limit at ten people. After that it seems like I’d lose consciousness from the mana exhaustion.

And moreover, if there are huge numbers of extremists, it would probably be difficult just to determine if there was forbidden magic cast, huh?

“Royce-sama, is it okay if I help out with the town reclamation?”

Still being hugged by Achille, I turned to Royce-sama.

“Hmm. I need your power, Camille.”

“Your Highness.”

Achille butt into our conversation. The arms around me squeezed tighter.

“Saying that so suddenly, did you intend on having Camille head to the frontlines from the beginning?”

“Mmn, she’s an essential war asset after all. If I send her out from the beginning, the number of victims will decrease.”

“Even though her mana control is still unstable? And moreover, she isn’t used to fighting humans.”

“Even so, she’s more capable than the other magicians or soldiers. Even I wouldn’t want to use her if possible, you know.”

Huh? Things seem a little stormy…

“Ah-, Achille?”

I quietly turned my around, to check how Achille was doing… And then I regretted it.

“Understood. Then I shall accompany Camille.”

Achille was staring at Royce-sama with a blizzard smile just like in the game.
Scary…

“B-, But hey. I mean, you have another job… A more, intellectual job, right-?”

“I can do that even on-scene. Camille?”

It’s no good. It doesn’t look like Achille has any intention of backing down.

Royce-sama seemed to be pondering something.

Chapter 2 - Q of Clovers (Part 1)

"'onestly, 'uu is it!? 'uu's the idiot that's been usin' gunpowder in the middle of the bloody town!?"

I heard that the town that my parents' clinic was in met with the extremists, so I came running.
I'm taking leave from my maid work today.

They probably set alight a large amount of gunpowder with magic.
A pillar of flame rose from the area near the town's central plaza. The clinic is fairly close to the plaza if you use the back streets.

There was a rumour that the extremist commoner forces had taken over a town close to this one but… it seems that it was true.

"What a troublesome bunch."

When I first found out about the existence of the extremists, I was feeling a little dissatisfied about the current monarchy, so I just silently watched over them though.
I was an idiot for considering for even an instant about supporting people who'll destroy the town like this. The people of this town who felt the same way as me are probably thinking the same thing. For a group who's opposing the monarchy for the sake of the people to be disrupting the lives of the people, what are they thinking?

"It would've been fine 'ad the soldiers just suppressed them earlier, but…"

This town lies in the territory of Viscount Jade so the soldiers of the Jade family are running about firefighting and leading the citizens to safety. But I know; the Jade family isn't financially affluent, so they don't maintain that many soldiers.
What's left is the town's vigilante brigade, but it seems that they already have their hands full with ensuring the safety of the citizens.
The nation's public safety force that's stationed in this town… were the very first ones targetted by the extremists, and were wiped out. I think they were stationed at the pillar of flame from earlier.

Even while that was happening, a bunch of people that seemed to be extremists were raising their voices in the area near the flame pillar.

"An organisation that ignores the livelihood of the people and does nothing but war internally is unneeeded!"

"An organisation that threatens the livelihoods of the people is unneeeded!"

Are they idiots? The ones threatening our livelihoods right now are you lot!

My parents' clinic was terribly busy.
Normally it'd be better for my parents to take shelter as well… but the injured kept being carried in one by one, so my father the doctor and my mother the nurse didn't run away.
Members of the public safety force, and normal citizens who were wrapped up in the extremists' attacks…

"Dad, mum!"

"Aurelia? Why are you in a place like this?"

“What about your work? This place is dangerous, so go back to the Viscount’s estate!”

My father and mother both took the same attitude.

“Today is my break day. I was worried, so I came to see ‘ow this place was goin’… I’ll ‘elp.”

I’ve always been helping my parents since I was small, so I can generally do the jobs required at the clinic.
Without listening to my parents, I began running about treating the patients.

“So you’re the ones that were sheltering the pawns of the nobles!”

The door to the clinic was suddenly opened, and a large man walked in.

“What’s with ya?”

One by one, men who seemed to be the large man’s companions came in one by one.

“The members of the public safety force should be here. Hand them over.”

“There’s no way we could hand over our patients to you people.”

My father had appeared from inside the clinic, and told the man as such with a firm attitude.

“Are you guys planning on supporting the nobles?”

The man closed in on my father with a severe expression.

At this rate, my father might be in danger… The moment I thought this, another extremist man barged into the clinic and shouted.

“The soldiers have been deployed from the castle! Head back right now!”

The men flew into a panic, and ran away from the clinic one by one.
Finally, all the extremist men disappeared from the clinic.

“We’re saved…”

My father and I both weakly sat down on the floor of the clinic.
After a while, my mother told me “You’re blocking the way.” and kicked me.
Oww…

Chapter 3 - Q of Hearts (Part 2)

This… might be different to the Revolution End.
In the game's Revolution End, at the very least, there was no mention of a town like this.
Or it could be that it just hadn't been mentioned in the story, but it really did end up in this state.

The game's Revolution End went like this.
The K of Clovers and the protagonist managed to get together…

After that, the Garnet Nation wanted to use her magic and aimed for her, but they somehow managed to avoid it. Three years later, they started the revolution and the monarchy collapsed.
The ringleader was shockingly revealed in the end to be the K of Clovers.
The revolution succeeded, and the king and Royce-sama were executed.
In front of the guillotine, the heroine and the K of Clovers stared at each other in a trance, and that scene spelled the end of the game's scenario[1], so we don't know what happened after the revolution.

"There's no way I'll let Royce-sama be executed."

I was sideways on my quill, and overlooked the chaotic city from high above in the skies.
There was a flame rising from the plaza. Around it was a group of men who seemed to be extremists, raising their voices.
I still can't hear what they're saying, but it's probably criticism towards the monarchy or something.
All of the extremists were wearing black clothing, and green scarves around their necks.

"It's worse than I thought, huh…"

They probably fought with the public safety force… there were vivid scars left here and there around the town.

"Now then, time to work, time to work."

My job was to indirectly assist the soldiers who were driving the extremists out of town, as well as help the soldiers who were taking back the other town from the extremists' hands.
This was the compromise between Royce-sama and Achille.
I wasn't standing on the front lines, but if the soldiers were in danger, then I'd lend them a hand… What a complicated position.
A few other Red magicians came along to this town. They should be carrying out their jobs of helping out the soldiers at other locations.
Achille went to check on the viscount's estate, and we'll be meeting up later. Thanks to the great efforts of the viscount's soldiers, it seems that the fire was kept at a small scale.
The soldiers from the castle charged into the plaza.

I'm worried about Achille who's gone elsewhere, and Royce-sama who remained at the castle.
I had the two of them wear the new tattoos that I completed.
Using the dyes from the flowers I plucked from the academy greenhouse, I tattooed their arms with a scale design. The effect is protecting the two from forbidden arts up to two times.
Honestly I wanted to do something more Hearts-ey like pictures of hearts or roses, but… I lacked the courage to draw those kinds of designs onto a man's body.
So I went with a simple design. You could even mistake it for a bracelet at first glance.
Of course, I have them on my arm too.
They can't completely protect us from forbidden arts, but I think that this is enough to somehow protect us from surprise attacks.

The soldiers of the castle were cornering the extremists. The soldiers were catching the scattering men.

“How strange.”

A certain group of extremists grouped together and ran in the same direction. And chasing them were soldiers.
Even though it would be easier to lose their pursuers if they split up, instead they’re showing no signs of breaking up which is odd. It looks almost as if they’re leading the soldiers somewhere.

They approached a narrow alleyway, and the moment that the soldiers formed a line, the extremists ambushed them from the side.
Some of them came out from the windows of commoner houses, some of them came from the side-streets, and they attacked the soldiers all together.
The line of soldiers fell into disarray.

“Mmn, things look bad at this rate, don’t they.”

Just in case, it’s better to do something early, right? Achille told me not to make a move until the very last moment thought.
From the skies above, I aimed for the direction of the extremists.

“Ummm, I wonder if sleeping magic and wind magic would be good… If I use too much magic then it seems like Achille will scold me again for wasting magic power after all.”

I used wind magic to carry the sleeping magic to the extremists.
The movements of the extremists who were vigorously attacking the soldiers became sluggish. They collapsed one by one.

“Ohh dearr. A few of our allied soldiers fell asleep as well… Adjusting this sure is hard.”

Well whatever. With this, the soldiers should make a comeback.
The soldiers who once again held the upper hand began arresting the extremists.

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“Camille!”

Somebody called out from behind me, and when I turned around, I found that Achille was floating on a quill just like I was.
It seems that he came back from the viscount’s villa before I knew it.

“Ah-, Achille. Welcome back. Was your villa okay?”

“It’s fine. Father and Desirée are dealing with the rest.”

He didn’t mention Dominique’s name… even though he’s the first son. And even though he’s the next head.
I had the feeling that it was better not to delve too deeply, so I decided not to mention it and just gave a smile.

“I see.”

“It seems that the soldiers of the castles have the upper hand here, huh. I wonder if driving all of the extremists out of town is just a matter of time.”

“Mn, it was annoying so I had them sle-… Ah, I mean, nevermind.”

“…”

Achille was looking at me like he wanted to say something, but in the end he just sighed.
Phew, it looks like I’m off the hook this time.

“Camille, let’s move to the town that has their headquarters. Another group of soldiers are already headed their way.”

I nodded towards Achille, and turned my quill towards the direction of that town.
This town is probably alright now.

“Got it.”

The town that serves as the extremist headquarters is just nearby.
We flew through the skies towards it.

Translator Notes

1. ‘scenario’ in english visual novel jargon etc. refers to the story/script.

Chapter 4 - K of Hearts (Part 1)

"Mn, mn… So she's coming?"

After receiving a message from Henri, I sank down into a luxurious chair in my room.
Everything in this room was chosen by me, as was the interior decoration of my dorm room at the academy. If I don't arrange the things around me myself, I just can't calm down. There have been traps in furniture countless times after all.

The "she" I mentioned, of course refers to Beatrix.
It was a bother making all the preparations and arrangements to take Beatrix as my wife, but with this it's a certainty that I can have her nearby now…

"She's probably angry, huhh."

There's no way that a straightforward and honest person like her wouldn't be dissatisfied with the methods I took.
I honestly wanted to spend more time deepening my relationship with her. Just like Achille and Camille… No, that really might have taken too long.
But I don't have much time left, so it can't be helped. It's the answer that I've reached after much thought.
And I don't regret this.
It's a decision I've made to ensure that the things important to me remain by my side.
I know. I know how easily the things important to you can disappear if you don't take extra care to protect them.

"I wonder if Achille and Camille are okay."

I'm quite worried about the safety of my two dear friends.
They're moving together with the soldiers sent to the town to suppress and drive out the extremists.
According to the notice from this morning, the extremists are planning on heading to Viscount Jade's territory from the territory they've controlled.

"I actually wanted to go with them too…"

It's impossible given my position though.
Sometimes I really loathe this position of mine, but nothing can be done about it. Being the case, I feel that it's better to make effective use of this shitty position and do something constructive.

Topageria have probably taken care of the thing I requested of them.
With this, the movements of the extremists should be restricted to an extent.
The king of the neighbouring nation didn't seem to particularly object. In exchange, I'm taking the knight of the second prince (who had issues finding a husband) as my queen after all.
The neighbouring nation seem to feel guilty about the Frau Monier incident too.
Who would have thought that one of the key members of the extremists was a Topagerian, even if adopted.
A reply from the Topagerian king came, saying that he had received my complaint and was moving to impede their activities.

It isn't just limited to outside the country. From now on there's a mountain of things I need to do internally.
I get it. I get that I'll eventually have to pay for something as selfish as wanting to enjoy school life a

little, despite knowing about the conflicts within the castle.

“It seems that our nation will need a large cleanup pretty soon, huh? It seems that all the filth in the castle has been just about gathered up after all.”

“Indeed, Your Highness.”

Henri smiled.
He’s the grand chamberlain that’s followed me since I was a child, and stays by my side even now.
Henri is like a parent figure, someone else important to me.

“Well then, let us move forward the preparations for the clean-up, Your Highness.”

“Mn.”

The proof that Achille spent many years researching to pull out the problem of these geezers… For some reason Achille is really good at finding these things, and I was taught by him too.
All that’s left is to clean up the castle from the roots.

“Sorry to my father and uncle but… if they covered up this much fraud commited by their subordinates, then they probably can’t be covered for anymore.”

And, one day I’ll be having them leave the castle as well.
Honestly I want to drive them out right this minute, but as you’d expect, that’s impossible at this stage.

-knock knock-

Somebody’s knocking at the door. I wonder who it is.
Right now is my precious rest time, so I even told them not to let anybody in.

“Just who is it…?”

Henri headed towards the door… and then returned with a bewildered expression.

“Y-, Your Highness…”

Without even even time to ask him what was wrong, the door to my room was violently opened.

“Seriously… Does not a single one of your subordinates know how to guide people properly?”

“Eh-?”

“Royce, we need to talk.”

Shaking off the chamberlains who tried to stop him as he boldly made his entrance was a person surprising enough that I couldn’t immediately complain due to the shock.

“Raiga… What are you doing here?”

Chapter 5 - K of Hearts (Part 2)

"Hmph, it's hard to relax in such a needlessly sparkly room."

Whilst saying that, Raiga arbitrarily decided to sit down on my sofa and made himself comfortable like he owned the thing.
If you're going to complain then I don't mind you getting lost… But Raiga doesn't seem to have any intention of leaving.
For now, let's try greeting him.

"Hey, Raiga. Is Mei healthy?"

"Yeah. Today I brought her with me to the castle. If possible, I'd like to let her go to school as much as possible, but her morning sickness is pretty bad so I think it's about time that she starts taking time off school."

It seems that Raiga is sweet on Mei as usual. Even his usual cold-looking face has loosened carelessly.

"Hm~mm, that sounds rough. …And so, what did you come to talk about today? Right now is my precious rest time you know?"

Henri who was standing nearby showed a baffled expression.
It's not unreasonable… At the end of the day, the one sitting here is Raiga.
Right now he's not antagonistic, but just a little while ago he was my natural enemy. When I was young I had a hard time because of his followers too.

Because of the incident with Count Tito earlier, we've gotten closer but… that doesn't mean that I can let my guard down yet.
After all, even though he owes us about Mei's rescue, he's acting ridiculously arrogantly right now.

"I came to tell you that I'd lend you my subordinates… Your subordinates are all theory-loving magicians aren't they?"

"Hahh? What are you talking about all of a sudden?"

"Like I said, I'll make it so that you can use my knight order. Honestly speaking, you don't have enough knights after all."

"Mm~mn, I can't really deny it."

It's just like Raiga says.

At present, the knights in the castle are splendidly split into the King Faction knight brigades and the Royal Prince Faction knight brigades, based on their dispositions.
And vexingly, the knights in the Royal Prince Faction… or rather, the knights under Raiga's control are better quality. Being a muscle-head, he has his own knights.

Right now the knights in the King Faction are constantly vying for accomplishments, and there are lots of times when they don't do their jobs properly when the time comes. It seems that the time that I was abducted was the same.
Even though they should have ability, instead of training their skills they're busy getting better at pushing the blame onto others… Honestly speaking, having Raiga's knights go with Achille and Camille would

be really reassuring.

“Magicians are a bundle of individualism, and aren’t suited for physical labour either. You need knights that you can use, right?”

Certainly, having knights in the extremist subjugation would be reassuring. When all’s said and done, their physical strength is on another level.
Both Camille and Achille are slender, so they’re not suited for jobs that use their body…

“But why did you suddenly feel like lending me your knights?”

Raiga suddenly averted his eyes.

“Hmph, you’re having trouble aren’t you…? Both that magic idiot and that prodigy in sheep’s clothing aren’t by your side.

Could it be that because Camille and Achille aren’t by my side… He’s paying attention to me?
That Raiga is? Even though he’s Raiga?

Since we were children, we haven’t gotten along.
We never directly fought but even so we had problems with each other.

“Have you gotten soft because you’ve become a father?”

I suppose wonders do happen.
Raiga looked at me and gave a massive grimace. Blue eyes just like mine narrowed unhappily.
But it doesn’t seem like he’s withdrawing his offer.

“I’ll be staying in the castle for a while you see… There are heaps of things to do.”

“Things to do?”

I reflexively asked him.

“The garbage that would harm Mei, I’m going to beat out all of it from the castle without exception…”

Then, isn’t that the same as what I’m doing? He wants to do something about the rotten leaders of this country, right?
…What timing.

“Raiga.”

“What?”

“I’ll help you with that. At the very least, I think I can completely clean up the King Faction after all, and I’ve prepared a few things for the Royal Prince Faction too.”

“I see.”

Raiga looked like he was thinking for a little. His silver hair wavered.

“Well then, I’ll try my best to do something about the Royal Prince Faction… Be careful. My father is moving to use this extremist case to take down the King Faction that’s full of openings.”

“I thought so… Geez, Ojisama, you sure didn’t betray my expectations.”

Honestly speaking, I’m grateful. From my position it’d be difficult to make a move on the nobles of the Royal Prince Faction, so it’s a great help to have Raiga make a move.

“I see.”

We decided to join forces. Our fathers quarrel without end, but there’s no reason that even we have to as well.
And moreover, our interests overlap.
If Raiga cooperates, then we probably won’t suffer from a surprise attack from the Royal Prince Faction while we’re busy with the extremists either.
In that respect, he’s a helpful cousin.

After that, he drank up the tea that Henri brought, demanded more tea and sweets, and after completely wasting my rest time, he left the room with a satisfied expression.
Didn’t he have any suspicions about poison being put in his drinks or food?
Is he broad minded? Or is he stupid, or bold? …I don’t really understand this cousin of mine.

Author’s Note:
Raiga-sama is clumsy, but is actually a good guy… is what this story was about (laughs)
With his beast-like intuition, he can see through enemies and poison.

Chapter 6 - Q of Hearts (Part 3)

"Uwwahhh. The town is falling apart."

The town that I was overlooking from the skies was more broken than I had imagined.
In particular, the areas around the mansion of the lord of this territory, Viscount Wazzurri, were extremely messed up.
The estate was half destroyed, and the areas of the town around it were burnt black as well, with mountains of rubble here and there.
There were few people in town, and it seems that the inhabitants of the town had fled somewhere else.
Mmn, this isn't a place that people can live anymore after all.

"…Are these extremists idiots?"

Achille quietly cursed besides me. It seems that he has some gripe with this.

"The extremists have their hideout somewhere in this town?"

"Yeah, we've already found it. And the people responsible for the hijacking of this town should be there, but…"

It seems that the spy unit has already been sent to investigate what was going on in this town.
The soldiers moved under leadership and entered the town.

"Camille, what do we do? This building is completely wrecked after all, and though we have orders to standby, I think staying in the air is too conspicuous."

A woman who was one of my Red coworkers called out to me. She's one of the magicians that was dispatched to rescue the town like me.
A number of Red magicians were floating in the air on quills just like we were.
This is of course, the magic that I made popular.

Unlike the soldiers from the castle, we magicians are being treated as a "Raid Unit". That's why we were able to act somewhat freely to an extent.

"Hmmm, Achille. What do we do?"

I left the problem all to Achille.
When it comes to difficult problems, there's nothing better than asking him. A prodigy like him should be able to come up with a smarter and better answer than I can.
And moreover, Achille's been granted some of the rights to command on scene at this town… Well, the subordinates he can use are just our raid unit though.
Achille normally works as an official, but because there's also the matter of being the son of the Magic Building Number Two's Soleil, the magicians follow his instructions relatively obediently.

"Let's see… The soldiers from the castle are attacking the town from all four directions, and at the time the extremists will be at an overwhelming disadvantage too. I think it's fine even if you don't do particularly do anything Camille."

It's here; his overprotectiveness. And that doesn't answer my question.

"Come on, don't dodge the question."

During our town recovery mission this time, Achille has been trying his best not to get me involved in battles.
It's totally clear from his attitude.

Right now we haven't spotted anybody obviously under the influence of forbidden arts so it might be fine but… I somehow can't agree to this. I did come all the way out here by Royce-sama's orders after all.
After all, it might be like that time again, when the town in the Jade family's territory was attacked, and the soldiers were in a pinch…
The extremists might be stopped in the end even if I don't help them directly, but even if only a little, I might be able to reduce the victims on our side.

"Camille."

"What?"

"Can you promise not to move on your own? That you won't leave my side?"

Mn? Could this be permission for me to act? No matter what he says, it feels like Achille is sweet on me in the end.

"I won't, I won't. I'll stay by your side."

I'll answer obediently just in case. Just staying in the air on standby to reduce the risk to the soldiers is a little pathetic after all.

"Can you see that building over there?"

Achille was pointing to a building with a flat wall. While all the buildings around it were broken, only that building stayed neat and tidy.

"Apparently that building is the hideout of the hijackers and their commander."

"Oooh!"

So all we have to do is charge in and arrest them, huh! Captain Achille!

"Let's hurry up and goo!"

I was suddenly filled with motivation.

"If we just stay floating up in the sky like this, we certainly do stand out after all. For now, let's try and find a safe place to land."

We chose a place where the soldiers and extremists weren't fighting to land.
The people left behind in this extremists base don't seem to number very many. All of the enemies are outside the base having a big fight with the soldiers.

"Even if people who seem to be normal citizens approach us, don't let your guard down… There might be enemies among them."

"Mn, got it."

We stepped down into an alleyway close to the enemy hideout.

“Time to charge.”

“We’re not going to charge in immediately. We have to check out the situation first… Although there are probably less people in there, we still don’t know how many people there are. We’ll charge after some accurate intel arrives.”

Announced Achille decisively. This damned prudent guy!

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“Oneechan!”

From the corner of the alleyway, I heard a child’s voice. When I turned around, I found that a little girl was standing there.

“Eh-…”

The girl’s long hair was tied in two, and she was holding a plush toy in one hand… Like that, she came running towards us.

“Hey, hey, can you help me? It’s scary!”

The girl spoke with a smile, and was clearly out of place in this town that had turned into a battlefield.

“Hey, help me?”

For just a single child to be alone here… It’s strange.
And moreover, even though the situation is like this, why is this girl smiling?

“Hey, hey, won’t you help me? I got separated from mama you see… so, help me?”

What’s with this… I have a bad feeling about this. Why that is though, I don’t know myself though.
But even Achille said not to relax my guard even if a normal person approached us after all.

-tick tock… tick tock…-

Suddenly, I could hear a somewhat systematic sound coming from the girl. The ticking sound continued.
I warily observed the girl. The sounds are coming from… inside the plush toy in her right hand.

“Let go of that!”

Probably realising the same thing I did, Achille quickly snatched the plush toy from the girl and threw it far away.
The next moment, the plush toy shone and exploded with a violent wind. An incredible roar resounded.
The surrounding buildings were destroyed by the blast of the explosion, and large holes opened up in the ground.

“What… was that?”

The doll… exploded?
We immediately defended with magic so everybody is unharmed. Achille covered the girl as well, so she wasn't injured. A female Red magician is searching the girl's clothing to see if there isn't anything else hidden.

"They probably put gunpowder inside the doll. It seems that they applied magic to it so that they could ignite it from a distance."

Achille told me this with a disgusted expression.

"The extremists did this?"

"Probably."

"That girl is…"

For such a small child to be wandering around with a doll that's basically a bomb…

"Probably with them. Isn't she following the instructions of the adults? I don't think that they told her about the gunpowder though…"

"What the hell! That's disgusting!"

It means that they had this girl hold dangerous explosives without her knowing.
Even though there's a good chance that she would've been blown up too if things went badly, she probably hadn't the slightest idea.

"Unforgiveable… Mn? Ah-, Achille look! At that girl's neck!"

I was pointing at a black bruise at the bottom of the girl's neck.

"Forbidden magic… even a child like this. It's probably a similar spell to the one that they tried to cast on me."

This is unbelievable!

"Hey, Achille. Do you think there are other children besides this girl that have forbidden magic cast on them? If there are, then we have to save them."

In the worst case, they could even die from an explosion.

"I'll use communication magic and warn the soldiers too. We can't let them come into contact with children holding explosive dolls and get caught up in the explosion."

"Yeah. And while we're at it, after they finish dealing with the explosives, tell them to shelter the children so that we can dispel the forbidden magic too."

We immediately sent off a communication magic.

While we were sending off a warning, a communication spell came came from a person who seemed to be a member of the spy unit.

"Hmm…"

“Achille, what did the spies say?”

“It seems that there are only ten-odd people in the extremist base. The others are all out.”

“Then even if we charge in…”

“Among them is a person who seems to be a powerful magician… He might be the guy who’s casting the forbidden spells right now.”

“Then he’s dangerous isn’t he!? We have to hurry up and catch him.”

“Camille.”

Achille gazed right at me with a serious expression.
Uu-, you don’t have to worry. I’m not going to charge in by myself or anything you know.

Chapter 7 - Q of Hearts (Part 4)

Complete silence reigned the inside of the extremist base.
On the way we met the girl with the gunpowder doll, but that was a coincidence, and didn't mean that we had been discovered by the enemy.
One of our magicians took that girl away to somewhere safe.

I was flying inside the enemy hideout while carefully searching for any traps like the ones from the time in Count Tito's mansion. Because it seems like I'm going to end up stepping on something again, I'm too afraid to walk…

"I wonder where the extremists are lurking."

Inside the building that served as the extremist headquarters, we split into two groups. So that the enemies couldn't escape, our two groups were simultaneously entering from the front and back of the building.
I was forced into Achille's group. The only ones who can dispel forbidden magic are us two, so I actually think it would be better if we moved separately but… Achille wouldn't let go of me.
Our group was entering from the front.
I had all the members of the back group get magic tattoos for repelling forbidden arts. I did them impromptu, so they can only nullify a forbidden spell once.

Right after we entered a small room close to the entrance, some men who appeared to be magicians came jumping out.

"Uwah-! They're here!"

All of them had black bruises on their neck.

"It's the same pattern as on the girl…"

Achille began freezing the magicians.

"If we undo the forbidden magic right now, the mana consumption will be no joke. I'll freeze them for now."

"Good idea. I'll do that too."

Our allied magicians all began freezing the magicians.
Anybody would hesitating about hurting people that might just be controlled by forbidden arts, huh.
The castle magicians are quite talented, so the cursed magicians ended up having their movements quickly sealed.

"I wonder if the one leading the enemies this time is the Heroine…"

"…We don't know yet, but if it's her, or someone who can use forbidden arts like her, things will get troublesome, huh?"

"We have to stop them… That's why we were dispatched for this mission after all."

In order to use magic to dispel forbidden arts, you need knowledge of forbidden arts. Dispelling them requires you to follow the steps of the forbidden spell in reverse and unravel it after all.

Even if we wanted to increase the number of personnel who can dispel forbidden arts, this part becomes a bottleneck, so at the moment it isn't possible.
A risk comes along with carelessly increasing the number of people who can use forbidden arts after all.

That's why Achille and I who can do so are accompanying the soldiers like this.
The ones casting the forbidden spells use up a large amount of magic power just like the ones doing the dispelling, so it isn't something they can so easily cast on a lot of people/
But…
The Heroine came to mind, and I ended up in this indescribable mood.
Just how much magic power does that girl have…? How many people can she cast a forbidden spell on at once…?
Unlike us, the Heroine has enough mana that you could call it a cheat.

"Camille, something is coming again…"

I stopped my quill at the sound of Achille's voice.

"I, kind of have a bad feeling."

I could hear the noisy footsteps of a number of people coming.

"Drop dead, you dogs of the nobles!"

A number of men running from further in the passageway all shot magic this way at once. More enemy magicians.
It seems that the enemies this time don't have any forbidden spells cast on them. There's no bruise on their neck.
Including these guys, do they add up to about ten-odd people…? That matches with the numbers of extremists hiding in this building.

"Shaddap, you scum! Quietly let us catch you!"

"Right! To do something like that to a child! We definitely won't forgive you!"

Our allied magicians defended against the enemy magic while sending back retorts.
Because of the incident a little earlier, their anger towards the extremists seems to have shot up as well.

"So impudent, you damned pigs!"

"Shut it, garbage! Ah-, how about you and Achille head in first? We'll do something about these guys. I think this is basically all of them, but there might still be some left inside."

"Y-, Yeah… G-, Got it! Achille."

"Hahh… It can't be that you're thinking that just the two of us should head in alone, right? Even though we have no idea what might be lurking in there."

"Mn?"

"Let's go after we meet up with the magicians coming in from the back."

"Achille, you're too cautious, you know."

“You’re just too carefree. There’s a possiblities that the enemies are waiting to drive us into a trap, you know.”

I got pulled from the side, and forcefully hugged by Achille. Hey-, the other magicians will see us you know!

“A-, Achille?”

“Of course I’ll be cautious… You’re here too, after all.”

While saying that, Achille skilfully fired off a communications spell.

Before long, some of the magicians who had gone around the back met up with us.
It seems that right now a number of soldiers are running up by the back entrance and gathering there. It seems that the reclaimation of the town is more or less done.
With this, we don’t have to worry about the enemies in here escaping either, do we?

Chapter 8 - J of Hearts (Part 1)

It's been on my mind for a long time now, but… just what's up with Camille's sense of wariness?
Even though I'm this, this, this worried about her…
She pays too little attention, in more than one way!

Camille who was in my arms wasn't stiffened up the way she used to be, but even so, perhaps because there was some shame still left behind, she would occasionally wriggle in embarassment.
Just thinking that I might lose this warmth of hers makes me succumb to terror.
I can't allow something like the incident behind the auditorium to happen a second time. That girl tried to directly cast forbidden magic onto Camille and I.

Before long, we met up with the magicians I called for.

"Did any extremists appear in the back?"

One of the magicians answered my question.

"Nah, there wasn't a single person in the back. Looks like you guys at the front drew the winning lot… But our side did find a door that wouldn't open."

"S-, Suspicious! They might be holing themselves in there!"

Camille leaned forward in excitement. It seemed like she was about to recklessly run off, so I tightened my hug and held her down.

"Gueh! Achille, it's tight, I give! I give-…!"

"…"

When Camille's here, any sense of tension is just sent flying away.

"You know, I found it suspicious too, so I tried to get inside, you see. But it was shut too tightly, and I couldn't get in… It seems that there's some shield-like magic cast on it, so."

The magicians told us the situation in more detail.
And then, once again, Camille began moving in my arms.

"If it's lock-picking then it might be my turn to shine! Gue-!"

"Quiet, Camille."

Why did it end up in this situation where she has to go…? Even though I actually wanted her to just stay back.

"It's fine, it's fine, I won't do anything dangerous. I had it rough that time with the heroine, after all."

Some truly untrustworthy words.
When Camille repeats her words twice is when you need to take extra care. The probability that she's just thoughtlessly saying whatever is exceedingly high.
Ever since Camille was hurt by that schoolgirl, the number of instances when she's willingly gone and jumped right into danger has increased. I'm worried to death.

“Achille, I get that your fiancée is important, but you shouldn’t overdo it with the overprotectiveness, yanno~?”

“Yeah, if it’s Camille she’ll be fine. On her own she burned a dragon to death, yanno?”

“She burned that giant squid to ashes too, didn’t she?”

“Yeah, yeah. Even though we could’ve eaten it if we kept the heat down, she went and burned the whole damned thing black…”

Aah, I’m getting pissed. Please stop with the irresponsible remarks.
To treat her like a superman that much… Even though she’s a normal human too. And Camille being Camille, she’ll try to live up to remarks like that too.

“…Achille?”

Camille who was in my arms peered in on my face, worriedly.
I get it, Camille heading out is the right decision. I asked Camille a question.

“You won’t jump into the enemy without thinking?”

“Mn. I’ll jump in after thinking.”

…It really is worrying.

※

From the back entrance, the sealed door was on the way to the centre of the building.
We didn’t meet any extremists on our way there, and easily reached the room.

“Here, huh?”

The other magicians and I cancelled our shield magic, and while that was happening, Camille opened the lock.

“Mn, mn, easy victory. The locks in the castle are scarier.”

So muttered Camille… Thankfully, it seems that none of the other magicians heard it.
Before long, the door opened.

At the same time as the door opening, we were engulfed in a flash of light.

“Uwah-”

“What’s going on?”

“So brightt!”

The magicians all responded in their own way.
The light quickly returned to normal.

“What was that?”

“A flash to use as cover? But despite that, I can see.”

“Yeah, me too… Just what did the enemy do?”

In the room in front of the bewildered magicians… stood a man.
A young man with purple hair, and long, thin grey eyes. He might be around the same age as Camille and I.
He was wearing the same black clothing as the other extremists, and a green scarf, and a number of small box-like magic items were hanging from his whole body.

“AAHH-!”

Standing beside me was Camille with a shocked expression.

“What’s wrong? Do you know him?”

Camille’s raspberry coloured eyes stared right at me. Without saying a thing, she drew her lips towards my ears.
Her face is close. If we weren’t in this kind of situation, just how happy would I be?

“He’s one of the characters from that story…”

She softly whispered, before turning to face the extremist man, clearly wary.
So even she had a certain amount of wariness, huh…? So I was thinking, feeling relieved at an odd time.

※

The extremist man seemed to be bewildered for some reason.

“Why, didn’t it work…?”

With a baffled expression, he backpedalled.
I thought of a certain possibility, and look at the magic tattoo on my arm.

“I thought so.”

The number of scales had decresed on the tattoo Camille drew.
It seems that this man cast forbidden magic on all of us at the same time. But, just where’s the magic power coming from…?
Even I can’t cast forbidden spells on close to ten people at once. Camille probably can’t either.
As for who can, it’s probably limited to only that girl from behind the auditorium. With her mana volume, it might be possible.

When I looked at the man again, the number of magic items hanging from him had decreased.
There might be some trick to those boxes. Like stored magic power or something…

“J of Clovers… Galuf Sharohm.”

Camille spoke a name that I’ve never heard before. If he’s one of the characters in the story she mentioned, I wonder what kind of position he had in the story.

“AHHH-, WHY!? SHIT-! That bastard better not have made me use a defective product-!”

The man wildly kicked a nearby wall.

“I wonder if he’s the commander.”

It seems that Camille is labelling the flustered guy in the room as the commander we’re targetting. I don’t know why, she she said it with confidence.

Chapter 9 - Q of Hearts (Part 5)

"Catch that man who's making a racket."

At Achille's instruction, the magicians began to move.
Aside from when it comes to his family and I, he's generally a keigo-using faker. Even in this situation he's going all-out with his faking.
The Red magicians fired magic towards Galuf.
Galuf agilely set up defensive magic, and avoided the magicians' attack.
As you'd expect, being the J of Clovers he's needlessly high spec.

"Aahh, geez, I knew he wasn't at school, but to think that Galuf would appear here."

Galuf Sharohm… A character who appeared in the otome game as the J of Clovers.
In the game, he was a delinquent student unsuited for the elite magic academy.
Because of his family's business (they do stuff that's socially unacceptable), and because of his bad actions, people only looked on at him from a distance, but the heroine spoke to him without fear so he opened up to her, and eventually he reformed because of her.
In his friendship end, after they graduated, they ended up having chats in town, just the two of them.
But… this Galuf is similar to the way he was before the game Galuf met the heroine. He's Before-Galuf.
And the thing he cast at us earlier, was probably forbidden magic.

"For Galuf to be able to use forbidden arts… What's going on?"

If you had to say it, he was a character more like Raiga who was bad at magic. Rather than magic, he was better at fighting using magic items.
And moreover, his mana volume shouldn't have been that great.
The number of boxes on him… the magic items have decreased in number, so he might be obtaining magic power from thsoe boxes.
And as for the condensed mana stuffed inside the boxes… there's a good chance that it's the Heroine's magic. Enough magic power to cast magic on that many people at once can't be gathered that simply after all.
Did Galuf intend on using forbidden magic to turn us into the pawns of the extremists, and then turn the tide of the battle…?

If you consider Galuf's family business, gathering those children wouldn't have been difficult either. It's unpleasant, but… I think they're children who were kidnapped and sold.

"I'll be taking the lead, so be careful of forbidden magic!"

My magic tattoos can protect me from forbidden magic one more time.
On the other hand, the magic tattoos on the other magicians were used up in the earlier attack.
We can't expose them to the risk of forbidden magic. If by chance they ended up falling under the power of a forbidden spell, it'd be hard work to dispel it after all.
I stepped out in front of the magicians.
Suddenly, Galuf looked at me.

"Mn?"

"You're, Camille Rhodolite, huh…?"

Why does Galuf know my name?

Wondering about this, I stared at his face.

“Well, can’t be helped. As a sorry for losing the town, how ’bout I give you as a present?”

Galuf took out a knife from his pocket.
It’s a magic item that can attack by weakening the power of things like magical shields.

“Geh-…”

I don’t really get why, but it seems that Galuf has me as a target.
The magicians seethed with killing bloodlust, and fired ice magic at him one after another, but Galuf disintegrating the spells with his knife.
As I thought, it looks like he’s the type who can show his battle prowess better with magic items, rather than magic. But, he’s strong.
Just a little unrest spread through the magicians.

“What’s with this guy.”

“Isn’t he strong enough that he’s like a totally different guy, now?”

While disintegrating the ice magic, Galuf held his hand towards the ground and a giant wall appeared.
A thick and see-through wall separated me from the other magicians.
From the other side, my comrades were shouting something, but I couldn’t hear.

“With this, there are no nuisances left, huh?”

With a smile, Galuf tried to cast a forbidden spell at me again.
Judging from the magic circle in the air, it’s a thought manipulation-type spell.
I checked the tattoo on my arm.
The number of scales decreased because of the magic from when we first entered the room, but Achille and I can still defend from one more.
I can’t let myself be controlled like a doll after all!

“L-, Like I’d let you turn me into a huan bombbb!”

“Mn? What are you misunderstanding?”

“I should be asking you what you were thinking doing something like that to a child. You plan on doing that to me too, right?”

“…Aah. So you met that, huh? It had good luck to be saved by you lot, huh. But I have no plans on doing that to you, yanno? Relax.”

It seems that Galuf doesn’t feel any guilt at all.
I quickly went through the steps to the forbidden spell in reverse, and rendered it ineffective.

“Shitt, why the fuck did it disappear?”

Galuf tried to use forbidden magic a few more times, but I had them all disappear.
As you’d expect, I’m getting tired though.

The number of magic items hanging from him was now zero.
But my mana pool is getting close to dry.

It feels like I'll run out of magic power if I counter one more forbidden spelll.

Not knowing when to give up, Galus left me behind and tried to escape.
Pushing his back to the wall, a hidden passage appeared. It seems that it's a large-scale trick based on a magic item.

"Ah-, wait!"

I went after Galus.
At the end of the hidden passage shone a magic circle that seemed to be for teleportationg.
It'll be bad if he gets on that!
I have to catch him before he teleports…

Using the remaining magic power I had, I tried to destroy the magic circle.
I can't use anything too large scale, but if it's just enough to destroy that magic circle, I think I can somehow manage.
But I was too focused on the magic circle, and wasn't paying attention to my feet…

-click- …

"Ah-…?"

-CRUNCH-

By the time I noticed, it was too late.

"Ow-, OWOW! What the heck is this!?"

My right ankle was caught in something something metal like a bear trap.
It was painful enough that tears came out. Blood was running from my ankle.
Looking carefully, there were bear-traps type things set up here and there on the ground.
They're way too prepared!

"Oh, lucky. Looks like I caught ya at just the right time, huh?"

Galuf tried to fire binding magic at me.
I went through the steps in reverse and nullified that magic, and while I was at it, I prepared an attack spell to fire at him.
Bastard, using traps on me, I won't forgive you!
However, the magic that should have been activated didn't come out from my hand.

"Nnn-?"

I didn't nullify the magic in time, and unable to move because of the binding spell, I fell to the ground.
Uuu… I hit my head.

"…Why?"

"That metal is a magic nullifying magic item for prisoners, yanno? Even if you try to use magic, it's pointless yanno."

W-, What a thing to use…
Speaking of which, my automatic defence tattoos are nullified too…

B-, Bad. This is totally bad.
In this situation, if he uses forbidden magic… I'm out!

Galuf approached me with a smirk.

"N-, No…"

"Oh? That's a nice expression, isn't it. That look that goes 'stay awayyy'… Let's have a closer look."

"S-, Stay away, perverttt!"

At the same time as my shout, a huge explosion happened.
I reflexively shut my eyes.

After the smoke and dust thrown up into the air from the explosion settled, I looked around and found… leaving the area around me entirely unharmed, the ground was deeply gouged out.
The magic circle along that gouge was splendidly destroyed as well.
It seems that Galuf was sent flying against the wall from the shock. He's flattened against a corner.

"That was magic… wasn't it?"

At some point, Galus' binding spell had been undone.
Since I could move now, I rose my body to check behind me.

"U- …no good. It really does hurt too much to stand… -wah-?"

While I was on my knees, I was suddenly hugged from behind.
Ummm…?

"Ah-, Achille?"

"Of course. Why is that what you asked? Does someone other than me do this to you too?"

"…Of course not."

I nervously apologised.
It seems that Achille's mood had taken a nose dive.
Moreover, it's an ultra bad mood that I've rarely seen in the last few years!

"Show me your foot?"

Not caring about my response, he took a hold of my ankle.

"It hurts, it hurts damn it!"

Achille disintegrated the bear trap with magic.
He looked painfully at my bloody leg. He looks kind of sorry for some reason.
Even though there's no reason he had to make a face like that too… Because in reality, the one that's hurting enough to cry is me, after all.
With a serious expression, Achille cast recover magic on my ankle.
The wound rapidly healed.

"Does it still hurt?"

“Mm~mn. It’s fine. It’s healed now… Thanks.”

Before I knew it, the other magicians were standing nearby.
Did they all break through that wall together?

“Please look after Camille for a little.”

Entrusting me, who was on the verge of mana exhaustion, and had moreover taken emotional damage from the bear-trap thing, to the other magicians, Achille headed towards Galuf.

“Tsk… Doing something damned pointless…”

Achille clicked his tongueeeeeeeeee!

“Even though I would have liked to stop you from ever taking another breath, if this weren’t a job…”

After giving Galuf a cold and dreadful glance, Achille cast binding magic on him.
It was layer upon layer of binding, and it looked like he couldn’t even speak anymore.
On top of that, he used magic to tear off a chain attached to the bear trap, and harshly bound Galuf’s arms with it.
…It’s overkill.

“Please arrest this piece of shit. Take him to the castle.”

“Achille…?”

The other magicians looked at Achille, dumbfounded.
It’s probably their first time seeing Achille’s true colours.
They’re dreadfully shaken.
But even shaken, the fact that they still properly did their job is as expected of the magicians of the castle.

“Camille…”

Achille caught me when I stood up totteringly, and roughly kissed me.

“Nn-”

Magic power flowed in from his mouth.
It immediately spread through my body, and I could stand like normal now.

“Achi, lle… ‘m, oka-”

I slowly parted from Achille’s lips.
If it continues like this, it feels like this time I won’t be able to stand for different reason.

“…You’re still not standing steadily. Isn’t that because you haven’t had enough?”

“No, that’s diff- …I’m good, I’m good, I said-”

Damned Achille… He’s saying this even though he knows, isn’t he?
If it’s Achille who can perfectly allot magic power, he should know how much mana I need to stand

properly.

“Geez, Camille. You’re being reserved, aren’t you? I have plenty of mana left, so you really don’t need to hold back, you know…”

“Like I said, that’s not- …I’m not being reser-, nn-…”

Aahh, I can feel tepid gazes from the other magicians.

“Was Achille this kind of guys?”

“Nah… but for some reason that way of speaking suits him too.”

“The two of them sure get along, huhh.”

The magicians all gave their own one-sided opinions, and had their fun.
Dammmit, don’t just watch and stop him please, somebody.

In the end, my legs gave way, and I was stuck with being carried around by Achille.

Wedding Preparations?

Chapter 10 - Q of Hearts (Part 1)

"nHyauu-…I-, I said I was sorry."
The arm that I tried to tear him off with got caught instead, and I got pulled towards him.

"Honestly. You never think, Camille."

"Uu… But I mean, you wouldn't think that that kind of thing would be set up in that kind of place, right!? The magic material used for that trap is super rare, you know? The materials are all rare minerals native to Topageria after all, and even in Garnet basically the only items that use it are the jails in the castle."

"And so, you jumped in, huh?"

…"

Achille gave a sigh. His beautiful face was tinged with unhappiness.

Achille and I have currently returned to the castle.
After we gave a general report to Royce-sama, we borrowed one of the guests rooms at the castle for resting. The other magicians were given their own rooms as gratitude as well. For some reason only Achille and I were given the same room, but…
Geez, Royce-sama, it would've be fine even if you weren't this considerate about this.

It's quite a better room than the break rooms in the Magic Building.
The walls are cream coloured, and the floor is made of wood. It's decorated with calming furnishings.
It's fully equipped with a sofa, and a desk, and a bed prepared too. It might be a room for use by foreign guests or something.

"Camille, you aren't tired? It was a pretty difficult expedition, wasn't it?"

For some reason Achille didn't lecture me today. His frank opinion regarding the expedition was limited to just the questions just now…
Just what's going on?
And I get the feeling that for a while now, he's been casually closing the distance between us. Lately Achille has been really indiscriminate with the time and place.
Even in the reclaimed town, I had various things done to me, but…
Being unable to stand like that was a first for me.

"It really is… too worrying, so I really don't think I can leave you be anymore."

Next to me, Achille muttered that with a grave expression. While clad in an atmosphere of unrest…

"Camille."

In a sweet tone, Achille gently called out to me.

"W-, What?"

Achille preciously played with my hair with both hands. I really do think I'm being treasured by him.
He's always been a good guy, but we got engaged, and ended up in a reciprocal relationship… the longer we're together, and with each of these events, he gets sweeter with me.
And while I was reflected in Achille's two cobalt eyes, he asked me seriously,

“Marry me?”

“Hah?”

Just now, what?
Achille raised his two hands to my face with its stupid expression.

“Eh-? Ehhh-?”

Just now, it couldn’t have been, …a proposal?

“Camille, your reply?”

Achille asked me for my reply with a smile, and looking at his eyes, I couldn’t tell what he was thinking.

“I mean, well, I have to ask Otousama and stuff as well, so…”

“Already got his blessing.”

“B-, But your family too…”

“No problems there either.”

“Royce-sama…”

“He said he’d be wishing for our happiness with all his heart.”

“…”

..*

“I actually intended for us to get married after we graduated from school. But we’ve withdrawn from school like this, and we probably won’t be able to graduate either, so… we can have it now, right? I’ve already waited plenty after all.”

“Achille?”

“I decided that after we came back from reclaiming the town, I’d properly tell this to you… After this there’s my job at the castle, and I’ll be busy with dealing with the villa too, so I thought that there was no time but now.”

Right, it seems that even after Achille’s back at the castle, he still has a lot of work to do.
On top of that, because of the effect of extremists, there’s the matter of their territory to deal with as well. That’s being taken care of by the family head Soleil, but as you’d expect, there’s probably no way that Achille doesn’t need to help out… I wonder what’s going on with the eldest son, Dominique. Achille didn’t mention his name even once, huhh.

“And so, your reply?”

He peered in one my face at close range.

“Uu…”

“Do you, dislike me?”

“Of course I don’t dislike you.”

Even though he gets it already… the reason that I’m hesitating with my reply.

Why, is he asking now?
Why is Achille this rushed…?
We all have our hands full with the extremist incident right now. Even though it would have been fine for us just to do it after this incident calmed down.

“I see. Then you’ll agree, right?”

“Eh-, ah-… B-, But,”

Achille quietly smiled. It kinda feels like I’m making a fuss on my own.

“Give me your hand?”

“Umm, um… Achille?”

For some reason, Achille was being pushy.

“Hurry.”

“YESH!”

Uuu, is this because we’ve been together all these years…? I obediently listen to his every word now. You might even say it’s already a conditioned reflex.
Just as I was told, I placed my hand on Achille’s palm like a dog.

Taking something out from his pocket, he took my left hand, and put something on my ring finger.

“Mn?”

That sparkly thing is…

“A ring…?”

“I didn’t give you one when we got engaged, after all.”

Is this one of those wedding rings? …It’s my first time seeing one. In the center of the thin ring with delicate decorations shone a pretty stone.
After having a good look at the ring, I tried to take it off my ring ringer… but,

“Huh? I can’t take it off.”

Even when I pulled at it, the ring wouldn’t move.
Even though it’s not as if the ring is all that tight. The ring fits it just right. I don’t recall telling Achille my size, though… I don’t really know the size of my fingers after all.

“It’s enchanted so that nobody except me can take it off.”

"…"

That sounds like something you'd find on a cursed item…
You often find that those type of items can't be taken off by the wearer.

"Through the ring, I can confirm your location and status at any time. Even if something happen, I'll be able to immediately tell."

That's like, a GPS from my old world, isn't it… And moreover, to be able to even tell your partner's status is…
I wonder if he was thinking that if I collapse from mana exhaustion, he could go and collect me.

"A-, Achille. No matter what, this is too…"

If I wear something like this, won't my actions be hugely limited?
I won't be able to do anything rash…

"You've managed to cause some sort of problem every single time, so just the worry alone feels like it'll burn a hole through my stomach."

"Uuu-! S-, Sorry…"

"So, wear this."

Being told that, it's hard to refuse.

"Even if I wanted to take it off, I can't, you know…?"

"It's crafted so that it can't be taken off, but I get the feeling that if it's you, you'll be able to take it off before long…"

Achille said that the ring was crafted. Craftmanship of a level that can't be undone even with my magic…
Could it be…

"…Is this something you made yourself, Achille?"

"That's right. It took me two years to make it, and I used magic to add various enchantments to it. It even covers magic tattoos bypasses."

"…Amazing!"

He's too skilled.
But once you consider that, then this ring is quite a precious magic item, isn't it. There's never been an item with this many enchantments on the market before.
It's enough that it makes me wonder if it's alright to wear this. Long live magic items! (traps excluded, though)

"Achille, what if you became a magic item craftsman? Even though you have this much talent for it."

"…If I get fired from my job at the castle, I might think about it. Well, let's leave that topic aside for now."

"Mn?"

"Won't you marry me?"

"Uu…"

We're back on topic.
His way of doing things is overbearing, but it looks like unlike the time with the engagement, he isn't thinking of unilaterally advancing things.
He's making sure to get my reply.

"I'll always treasure you. I'll properly do the work of your marquis family, and I'll get along with your father and the servants too."

"Hey, why are you asking now?"

"Because it's now. I want to become your husband even a little faster, and the truth is, even when we were going to school, I was always enduring…"

Achille, probably isn't lying. The words just now were unmistakably his real feelings.
But, I get the feeling that it isn't the whole picture.
It's the season for the proposal too…

But…
I'm definitely not unhappy about him formally proposing to me. It made me purely happy.
I don't know what Achille's intent is, but he won't do anything that would hurt me. I can trust in that.
So I thought that I would just obediently accept his proposal.
My mouth moved naturally.

"Okay."

Even though he was the one who suggested it, Achille's cobalt eyes widened in shock for an instant. He immediately fixed his posture, and an expression of composure returned to him though…
Realising that I had been intently observing him, to avoid the issue he gave me a tight hug, so I couldn't see his face anymore.

Could it be that Royce-sama… lent us this room so that Achille could propose?
Only now, did I finally notice that fact.

Chapter 11 - Q of Hearts (Part 2)

"Congratulations, looks like it went well! Achille, Camille, just how long have I waited for this moment!?"

The very moment that I left the room, I was hugged by Royce-sama along with Achille.

"In other words, you were peeking again, weren't you?"

It's something that happens every time, so I eventually got used to it.

Even though our wedding was confirmed before Royce-sama's, it seems that he doesn't think of it as a problem at all.

"Well then, for the ceremony, I'll be getting involved in various ways too. It would be better to have the date sooner than later, right?"

"…You planned on this from the beginning, did you now?"

The conversation between Royce-sama and Achille is steadily progressing.

"I'm sure Camille will look cute in the dress. I'm sure looking forward to it."

"Royce-sama…"

When he calls me "cute" with a sparkling smile, even now my heart starts beating faster.

While I was entranced by Royce-sama, from behind, Achille's arms wrapped around my waist.

"Camille."

The voice, and the actions that he used with me, were gentler and sweeter than even before.

"Achile…"

I wonder if he feels my words, and my actions, to be sweet like this.
Absolutely everything was going too fast, but I felt happy about it too, so… I was in chaos. My thoughts have already melted, and it seems like I won't be able to think about anything.

..*

And the result of that…

"Oh my god."

In the blink of an eye, the topic progressed…
And with Royce-sama as the witness, on that day, on paper, Achille and I ended up married.

"Signed. These documents… I signed them."

In this world, it seems that if those documents are officially recognised, you'll be a married couple.
And from church officials called from who knows where, to Royce-sama, Soleil, and father who was

still at work, to nobles on good terms with us, were all thoroughly gathered here. This, would have been impossible if they hadn't prepared this in advance, right….?

"Camille, with this we're finally husband and wife aren't we?"

Achille whispered this into my ear, so my various thoughts ended up dispersing.

"Mn… Achille."

"The wedding ring will be for the ceremony… Look forward to it?"

"Eh-, another one of your handmades?"

"Of course."

That might be super interesting.
The engagement ring was pretty amazing too, but the wedding ring that Achille tempted me with a "look forward to it" for will definitely be something amazing.
I could hardly wait for the wedding ceremony.

※

The days got deeper into autumn, and a slightly chilly season arrived.
The hallways in the marquis estate were a little cold too.
I was wearing a thick, cocoa brown dress that I wasn't used to, and looking outside through the window.
Since then, news of the extremists has died down. It seems that Royce-sama and Achille are doing various things at the castle, but no information reaches me directly.

Today is the day that Achille is moving to my house… in other words, the marquis estate. His much desired life as the next marquis is finally about to start.
I've been nothing but restless since this morning.
It feels weird that I'm going to be living with Achille from now on, and it's a little embarassing.

..*

Congratulatory presents from Achille's sisters Déborah and Desirée have come.
There are a lot of things that need to be prepared so the ceremony itself is still a ways away, but there's no doubt that it's basically just a countdown. Royce-sama has the say in deciding the date.
I'm happy, but everything is going forward so smoothly, that it's kind of scary.
I gave consulting Déborah a try with communication magic, but a completely lazy "That's just bridal nerves, ohoho." was all I got back.

Through the window I spotted a carriage from the Jade Viscount family arriving at our Rhodolite Marquis estate, and I ran down the stairs.
The servants were all lined up before the door to our estate in order to welcome Achille. They've been quickly getting the preparations ready for welcoming Achille in. Amongst them, the head maid Aimée had been preparing in even higher spirits than the rest. She's always been very fond of Achille.

"Camille."

When I opened the door, Achille appeared in formal dress. Servants from the Jade family were surrounding him.

“Ah-, Achille. Um…”

Unlike usual, this time he hasn’t come over to play. From now on, we’ll be living in this house together. Once I think of that, my heart suddenly starts to thump, and I get all shy.

“Take care of me from now on.”

“M-, Mn. Me too.”

Uuu, our exchange just now was somehow embarassing. My face is heating up.

“Achille, if anything at all troubles you here, just say so, okay?”

“Thanks.”

After saying that, in front of all the servants, Achille took my hand and kissed it. The servants of my family all pretended like they didn’t see anything, but people like Aimée were definitely really excited inside.

I guided Achille to his room.
Aimée had prepared everything in high spirits, so the room was all ready.

“This is your room, Achille.”

I pointed to a room that had good sunlight exposure. The furnishing was chosen by the servants, and was chic, but overflowing with a high class feeling.

“Oh? You emptied this room for me? It’s big, isn’t it… What’s more, it’s next to your room, Camille.”

“Aimée recommended that it be this one after all.”

For some reason Aimée was really stubborn about this room. I didn’t particularly mind either, so I left it all to her.

“I see. I like this room too.”

“I see. I’m glad that you like it.”

This room certainly is big but… there’s a door that links directly to mine, so I don’t think Achille will be able to feel at ease though, huh?
It might be better to seal it up later.
I added “Seal the door.” to the list of things to do in my mind.

Chapter 12 - J of Hearts (Part 1)

After returning from the expedition, I managed to report to His Highness without a problem.

I was about to leave the room, but His Highness called out to me.

"Achille… Mind if I have a minute?"

Camille and the other magicians were headed to the rooms that His Highness provided for them to rest in.
I know what His Highness wants to talk about.
Even since we got back from the castle, I've been preparing for it too.

"There are no problems with the marriage with Camille, right?"

"Yes… The rest depends on her though."

I'm finally going to get married to Camille.

The truth is before we left for the expedition, His Highness sounded me out.
'You don't have a reason to wait for school graduation anymore, so how about becoming husband and wife with Camille?' he asked.
For both His Highness and I, me having the title of next marquis makes our jobs easier. So there's probably that too.
With his dealings with Topageria, for now the 2nd Prince has given up on Camille.
But with that, there's the worry about whether or not the 2nd Prince has so easily given up.
At any rate, immediately after the deal with Topageria was complete, the 2nd Prince had a secret meeting with Camille in the greenhouse. Camille escaping from the window while she was in recovering is just Camille though.

And then, after we returned from the expedition, the concerns increased by one.
The man that we met when we went to suppress the extremists together…
The words and behaviour of that man who commanded the extremists, Galuf, has been on my mind. In the middle of the battle, he began to speak as though he were aiming for Camille.

『Well, can't be helped. As a sorry for losing the town, how 'bout I give you as a present?』

His words indicated that he knew of "Camille Rhodolite".
The interrogaters have been asking about the meanining of "present", but even now, the man named Galus is apparently not speaking.
At present, he's being detained in the castle as a serious criminal. It is probably only a matter of time before the interrogators use "confession" magic. After all, we'll be having them leave soon; those problematic geezers that only say stuff like "That's a human rights violation." at a time like this.

"Certainly, waiting until everything settles down would make me anxious."

I told His Highness.

I don't know when the hands of a demon might reach for Camille.
She's ignorant of the dangers to herself, and each time, despite jumping vigorously into danger, she's always too careless at the end.
During this expedition in particular, seeing the moment just before Camille got her leg caught in the trap

felt like my heart was going to freeze over.

“She really… is too worrying. You can’t let her be any longer, huh? Achille.”

“…It seems so.”

Ever since I’ve met Camille, I’ve always wanted to become her husband.
At first it was because I was calculating, but gradually there was another emotion as well.
I didn’t think that I would be making it a reality in a way like this, but if she consented then I’d like to make her mine this very moment. Having come this far, I’ll absolutely pass on having someone else snatch her away from the side.

I went to meet with Camille in the room that His Highness prepared.
She was curled up on a chair by the window, apparently finding the baked sweets quite delicious.
Even though she went through such a dangerous experience, she’s already acting like nothing happened.
She really is somebody who doesn’t reflect enough.

“Camille.”

“Nn? Oh, are you on break, Achille? Have you already finished your talk with Royce-sama?”

“Mmn. For now.”

“That’s great! With this, the town reclamation incident is over, huh-!”

What the heck is “over, huh-!”, you Bakamille. Completely worrying others like that.

“This happens every time, but… Camille, you haven’t reflected at all, huh?”

Perhaps because she sensed the unrest in my mood… she put some distance between us, and tried to escape to the window. Of course, I didn’t let her escape.

“DAHHHHHHHHHH-! I’m reflecting-! I’ll reflect-! I’m sorry, Achille-!”

Even with her arms pinned behind her back, Camille tenaciously resisted. Like that, I whispered in her ear.

“Camille?”

“nHyauu-…I-, I said I was sorry.”

Camille’s weak in her ears. Ever since I found this out at the age of 5, she’s always been like this. For now, I’ll keep her pinned like this until she behaves. Just as expected, her resistance immediately weakened.
With that opening, I pulled her into a hug. Perhaps because she was giving up, Camille obediently let me.

“Honestly. You never think, Camille.”

“Uu… But I mean, you wouldn’t think that that kind of thing would be set up in that kind of place, right!? The magic material used for that trap is super rare, you know? The materials are all rare minerals native to Topageria after all, and even in Garnet basically the only items that use it are the jails in the castle.”

“And so, you jumped in, huh?”

"…"

I sighed. She really never learns…

"It really is… too worrying, so I really don't think I can leave you be anymore."

My momentum got messed up. This isn't good. I didn't come here to lecture here, but to propose.
While I was thinking, I pinned down Camille who was trying to escape from my arms, and closed in on her. While touching her pink, smooth hair, I proposed.

"Camille."

"W-, What?"

"Marry me?"

"Hah?"

Camille… There's no need to go "Hah?" with such a stupid expression, right?
The difference in our enthusiasm is so great that I want to cry.

"Eh-? Ehhh-?"

It took some time, but it seems that she finally comprehended the meaning of the words. It was cute how her face turned red, and she started getting flutered.
But I couldn't let her escape at this point, so I decided to cautiously progress the conversation.

"Camille, your reply?"

While looking at my face, Camille froze up.

"I mean, well, I have to ask Otousama and stuff as well, so…"

"Already got his blessing."

"B-, But your family too…"

"No problems there either."

"Royce-sama…"

"He said he'd be wishing for our happiness with all his heart."

"…"

Sorry, but I had all of the escape routes she brought up, blocked.

"I actually intended for us to get married after we graduated from school. But we've withdrawn from school like this, and we probably won't be able to graduate either, so… we can have it now, right? I've already waited plenty after all."

"Achille?"

“I decided that after we came back from reclaiming the town, I’d properly tell this to you… After this there’s my job at the castle, and I’ll be busy with dealing with the villa too, so I thought that there was no time but now.”

There are still a mountain of things I have to do after this.
Completing the major clean-up of the castle, eliminating the extremists, reviving the areas around the Jade family’s villa, and various things outside of that.
Speaking frankly, there won’t be a chance to say this later.

“And so, your reply?”

“Uu…”

After peering in on her face at close range, Camille embarassedly averted her eyes. She’s trembling like a small animal.
She isn’t doing this on purpose; she just naturally does these sort of things, so it’s amazing, isn’t it?

“Do you, dislike me?”

“Of course I don’t dislike you.”

“I see. Then you’ll agree, right?”

“Eh-, ah-… B-, But,”

Camille still hasn’t given a decisive response.

It can’t be helped, so I decided to settle one other issue.
So that I can check her position and status during emergencies, I prepared a collar- …I mean, a ring. In order to avoid things like what happened this time, or last time.

“Give me your hand?”

“Umm, um… Achille?”

“Hurry.”

“YESH!”

I took Camille’s slender hand, and had her wear the ring.
She gazed at the ring in wonder.

“Huh? I can’t take it off.”

Did she intend on immediately taking it off?
Like I thought, making it so that she couldn’t take it off was the correct decision.

“It’s enchanted so that nobody except me can take it off.”

“…Is this something you made yourself, Achille?”

“That’s right. It took me two years to make it, and I used magic to add various enchantments to it. It even

covers magic tattoos bypasses."

"…Amazing!"

It seems that rather than the issue of being unable to take it off, Camille is more interested in the fact that I crafted it. As expected of her.

"Achille, what if you became a magic item craftsman? Even though you have this much talent for it."

And it seems that in her eyes, being a magic item craftsman is an even more important position than a prime minister.

"…If I get fired from my job at the castle, I might think about it. Well, let's leave that topic aside for now."

"Mn?"

"Won't you marry me?"

"Uu…"

The time when we got engaged, without waiting for her reply, I completed everything behind her back.
The result of that was that up until just recently, I was stuck dealing with various troubles regarding the un-self-consciously super blockheaded Camille.
So this time, I decided that I would go through with it after properly asking for her reply.

"I'll always treasure you. I'll properly do the work of your marquis family, and I'll get along with your father and the servants too."

"Hey, why are you asking now?"

"Because it's now. I want to become your husband even a little faster, and the truth is, even when we were going to school, I was always enduring…"

It seems that Camille has noticed that I'm in a rush. Having said that though, I don't want to worry her by telling about the various circumstances regarding Topageria.

While I was feeling conflicted, Camille suddenly told me in a small voice.

"Okay."

It's okay?

It's something I brought up myself, but I didn't expect that she would reply so readily. Even I had decided that today I would be persistent until she agreed, it's suddenly an anti-climax. But it doesn't change the fact that I'm happy.
Even though Camille realised that I hadn't told her all the circumstances, she still gave me her consent for the marriage.
When I considered that, she was so lovely that I couldn't bear it.

Your Highness you idiot! Why did you prepare this room so thoroughly with all this furniture? Of all things, to give us this room with this many temptations… It was definitely on purpose.
Camille is staring at me with her pure, raspberry eyes…

In order to call back my reason, I embraced her tightly, and composed myself.

On that day, on paper, Camille and I became officially husband and wife.
Various things were prepared in advanced, so both the documents and the witnesses were complete.
It seems that rather than the documents, Camille was more concerned with the magic item wedding ring but… well, that's something for her to look forward to on the ceremony, isn't it?

And so, it was decided that I would be moving to Camille's house.

Chapter 13 - J of Hearts (Part 2)

"Achille, if anything at all troubles you here, just say so, okay?"

"Thanks."

Today is a rare occasion where Camille is wearing a dress.
The thick, cocoa brown dress goes quite well with her pink hair.
She's always wearing her work-use robes, but as you'd expect, she's cute wearing clothes suitable for a young noble girl as well.

It was immediately decided that Camille and I who are married on paper would be living together.
From today onwards, I'll be living at the Rhodolite Marquis residence as the next head.
I'm happy about the jump ahead in life as well, but more than that, I'm happy that I'll be living under the same roof as Camille. I won't tell her that though.

It's the Rhodolite house that I visit quite often, but now that I'm living here, a lot of things are fresh.
Camille guided me to my room.
She seems unusually restless. Her cheeks are just faintly tinged peachy pink.

"This is your room, Achille."

It's probably something that the servants prepared, and the furnishing is all neatly set.
It's located right next to Camille's room after all, and there's even a door in the middle of the room that leads to hers.

"…"

I mean, I predicted something like this but… it's that kind of door, right?
Calm down, calm down, me.

I heard that it was a door that was forbidden entry, but since I'm the next head, I can freely come and go anywhere in this mansion.
The only thing was that I was warned that the Marquis and Camille's rooms were dangerous during their experiments, so it would be better to take care.
The rules of the house are just like the people who live there in that they're relaxed in various ways…
But it seems like this will turn out to be the best place I've ever lived.
The bar, the orphanage, and the viscount's estate weren't really places I could really call comfortable.

※

After I finished lunch, I discovered Camille in her room working on something in her room with the door wide open.
While touching the door that connected our rooms, she was worrying about something while trying this, and trying that.

"Camille… What are you doing?"

"Ah-, Achille. I was thinking that I'd fix the wall."

“Wall?”

“Right. You see, isn’t your room directly connected to my room here? I was thinking that there wouldn’t be any privacy, so you wouldn’t be able to really relax…”

…Hang on.
Does she plan on sealing the door?

Camille tilted her head with an ‘Is something the matter?’ look on her face.
This girl is serious.
It seems she’s seriously thinking about what’s best for me, and trying to seal the door for my sake.

“Umm, Achille… What’s wrong?”

With a mystified expression, she looked back and forth between the door and I.

Asking me with her eyes, ‘What do I do about this?’.
When it seemed like I was going to hold my head at wits end, with perfect timing, a saviour appeared before me.

“Camille-sama, regarding tonight’s dinner…”

It’s the head maid of this estate; Aimée. Her eyes were turned towards Camille inside the room.

“Umm, Camille-sama… May I ask what on earth is it that you’re doing?”

“I was thinking that maaybe I should turn this door into a wall. If I can always come in and out, then wouldn’t Achille be really pitiful?”

“…”

The head maid froze up at Camille’s reply. And then, like that, she looked at me like she was looking at a pitiful person.
I also felt sympathy for this maid who had served Camille for many years.

“I am terribly sorry, Achille-sama.”

“No, it’s fine…”

We exchanged awkward glances with each other.

“Afterwards I’ll have a looooooooooong talk with Camille-sama.”

Aimée turned an extremely menacing glance towards the lady that she served.

“Mn? What’s wrong, you two? I wonder what colour we should make the wall.”

“CAMILLE-SAMAAAAAAA!”

The chief maid who grabbed the hand of the startled Camille, dragged her downstairs just like that.
Camille… Your position in this house is so low.

I left the education of my new wife to Aimée, and decided just to watch over the outcome.

Newlywed Life

Chapter 14 - Q of Hearts (Part 1)

Wh-, Wh-, Wh-, What do I do!?
That door.

"Had that sort of meaning…?"

UWAHH, UWAAAAHHHHHHHHH-!
I squatted, my face bright red.

As you'd expect, as a former high school girl, when I received Aimée's lecture/explanation, I more or less understood.
In other words, the door connecting my room and Achille's was… a door with that kind of meaning!
I reflexively held my head.
Even when I try to feign calm, the various things in my head and the various things Aimée said… I can't clear them from my mind.

"AAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH————————!"

"What's wrong, Camille?"

At the dinner table, Achille who didn't know anything was worried about me when I suddenly began screaming with a bright red face.
What do I do? Because of Aimée I can't stay calm now.

"It-…I-I-I-I-It's nothing, you, know?"

Because of work, tonight my father is staying at the castle, and there's nobody at the estate but me, Achille, and the servants.
B-, But… today is the first day since Achille has come here.
W-, Would it be normal for us to do that rite-of-passage thing for newlyweds…?
Aimée said so too, after all.

What do I do, what do I do?

"Camille, want this?"

"Mn?"

When I looked, I found that Achille had scooped out some of the pseudo-crème caramel with a spoon.

"Ah. I do ♪"

"Okay, then open wide?"

When I opened my mouth wide, Achille fed me the pseudo-crème caramel himself.
Hau~n, sweeet ♪

"Can I have moore?"

"! …"

Huh…? What's wrong? Achille's ears are a little red.
And it looks like he's muttering something under his breath. It was too quiet for me to hear anything though.

"Ah-, sorry Achille. If you want to eat it, then…"

"Eh-?"

His cobalt eyes spread in surprise.

"T-, That's not it-, that isn't it."

"What. So I can have the rest then?"

I took up Achille on his "You can have all of it." and decided to help myself to all of his pseudo-crème caramel.

"Camille, there's some stuck by your mouth, you know?"

Saying so, Achille ran his long finger along my lips.

"…-nn."

That moment, a somewhat ticklish and somewhat sweet sensation rushed through my body. What is this?

"ah-… Achille-"

Seeing me like that, Achille stifled a chuckle.

"Cute."

"…!"

C-, C-C-C-C-Cute he says…? It's something that Achille almost never says to me!
I can tell that the temperature of my face is shooting up.

Achille narrowd his cobalt eyes lovingly, and looked at the flustered me.
I could see Aimée by the wall, fixedly staring at the fully composed Achille and I who was completely being led around by the nose, but right now I didn't have the composure to complain to her.

※

"I can't relax…"

Even in the bath that should have been a place of rest, an incident awaited me.
In front of me, who had been more carefully cleaned by the servants than usual, that appeared.

"Eh-… UEHHHH?"

"What's the matter, Camille-sama?"

One of the maids called out to me while I was lost.

“Um, you know, this isn’t my usual room wear, you know? Something different’s been left here, but…”

“Please use that as your change of clothes today.”

“…This!?”

My eyes were fixed on that.

“I-, I can’t. Ican’tIcan’tIcan’tIcan’tIcan’t!”

What is this?
What is this overly sexy negligee!?

“I can’t wear something like this…”

With it still fluttering in my hand, I stood frozen.

Seeing me like this, the maids spoke to me troubledly. With a slightly heartbroken expression.

“Please, please wear this. If you don’t wear that, Camille-sama, we will be…”

“Eh-?”

I panicked.
The maid before my eyes began to break down into tears.

“For being unable to complete our jobs, we will be driven away by Aimée to a harsher workplace…”

“Ehh-? Really?”

Aren’t I under huge responsibility!?

For some reason, even the other maids began silently pressuring me with tearful eyes.

“D-, Don’t cry. I’ll make sure to tell Aimée to cancel the staff transfer.”

“You will wear it for us?”

They begged me with desperate expressions.

“No, like I said, I’ll talk to…”

“You will wear it for us, right?”

“No, like I said…”

“You will wear it for us, won’t you?”

“…Yes.”

They pressured me into giving in…
But, if I say that I can’t wear it now, I get the feeling that I won’t leave the bathroom alive. That’s just

how desperate they are.

When I reluctantly accepted, the maid joyfully dressed me in the sexy outfit. The other maids all gathered around me with a smile that seemed to say ‘this is our chance’ as well.
It’s like the tragedy from earlier was a lie.
Huh? Could it be… that I was duped?
I’m realising it only now.

But while I was in shock, the maids had changed me into the outfit in question.
Even if I complain, it’s already too late.

Chapter 15 - Q of Hearts (Part 2)

"Come on, Camille-sama!"

"U-, Uu-"

"Hurry! Please prepare yourself!"

"B-, But… Whoa-?"

Because of the impact from being pushed from behind, I stumbled forward and fell down.

"Aahh-"

bang…

Falling forward because I lost my balance, the door closed behind me with nobody else having gone through.
I even heard the click of the door being locked. Damn you, Aimée, locking me out!
When the time comes, I can unlock a lock of that level at any time, you know.

"…Camille?"

"!"

I could hear the voice of the owner of this room above me.

"Are you okay? Can you stand?"

"Achille…"

In the middle of the darkened room stood the childhood friend who had become my husband.
His neat and sweet face was illuminated by the light in the room.

It's night right now. It's pitch black outside the windows, and the only source of light in the mansion are the lights from the magic lanterns.
Having finished bathing and being unwillingly changed by the maid into this outfit, I returned to my room but Aimée who was lying in wait threw me through that door into the next room, and I ended up getting locked out of my own room.
And because of that, I exposed the shameful sight of falling straight forward onto the floor.

"I-, I'm fine. I can stand on my own, you know."

With my two hands on the floor, just before I was about to get up myself, Achille helped me up.

"You're not injured anywhere? Show me for a min-… -?"

"…?"

Nn?
What's wrong? Achille's words cut off part-way.
Wondering what was up, I looked up at his face, and found that his expression was stiff for some reason.

Not just his expression either; if I looked carefully, his whole body had stiffened up. It's an expression with no composure; rare for him.

"U-, Umm… Are you okay, Achille? Are you, feeling bad?"

"…"

There's no reply.

"Achille?"

I tried my best to bring his consciousness back by calling out to him, but there really was no change. His gaze was just fixed on one spot, and seemingly shaking,…

"…Geh-!"

When I looked carefully, I found that his gaze was on me… How do I say this, isn't his eyes fixed above my sexy negligee!?
Awawawa, speaking of which, I was wearing a super embarassing outfit!

It's a dangerous outfit that's an incredibly short, plain black, slightly see-through lace nightwear.
WAHH! UWAHHHHH! What do I do!?
ACHILLE IS LOOKING AT MEEEEEEEE! A-, A hole! I want to bury myself in a hole!
Where is it!? WHERE'S THE HOLE FOR ME TO BURY MYSELF IN-!?

Because of my magnificently uncomposed behaviour, seeing that, Achille instead seemed to be gaining his footing back.
A little calmness seemed to have returned to his expression.

"Camille."

But, I can somewhat feel a feverish gaze on me.

"Uu-… Um, umm. T-, There are circumstances for these clothes. The maids put it on, s-, so I'll be going, okay-? …Uohh-"

Before I could finish speaking, I ended up strongly embraced.

"…Camille."

Like that, I was caught by Achille, and got carried all the way to the bed. He gently put me down on top of the fluffy quilt.

"Y-, You're wrong-. This definitely isn't a hobby of mine…"

"You dressed like that for me, didn't you?"

"L-, Like I said, circumstances…"

Uwahhhh, what's with this shame-play? LET THIS ENDDD!

"Can I have a better look?"

“No! It’s embarassing!”

Unable to bear this any longer, I hid my whole body behind my two arms.

“Why? It’s cute.”

“Eh-?”

At that moment, my body softly hung in the air, before falling. I can feel the soft bed on my back.

I could see in my vision Achille, and the ceiling of the canopy bed.

“Huh?”

This means… I was, pushed down?

“A-, A-A-A-A-Achille.”

Watching me fall into unrest and behind doing strange things, Achille stifled a laugh. Every single one of his actions is amorous.
He looked down on me with his passion-tinged cobalt eyes.
It’s like being frozen earlier was a lie.

“Camille, am I no good?”

“T-, That’s not it. Don’t I always tell you?”

“Am I, scary?”

I shook my head back and forth.

“Y-, You’re not scary, you know. You definitely won’t do anything cruel to me.”

“Then, having me do that kind of thing to you, are you against it?”

He smoothly stroked the nape of my neck with his finger. As you’d expect, even I could guess his intentions.

“-, hii- ‘m not, against it…”

It’s not that I’m against it. Probably. …I’m incredibly embarassed through.

“I-, It’s okay… I don’t dislike you, after all.”

That’s how it is.
Whatever I say, I like him. I cherish him. I have no objections with marrying him either.

“I won’t do anything cruel to you. I promise.”

“Mn…”

I can believe in his words. Even right now, so that he doesn’t scare me, he’s carefully making sure I’m okay.

I prepared myself, and embraced him.

“I believe you. It’s you, after all.”

Chapter 16 - Q of Hearts (Part 2.5)

"Mm, mmn…"

My eyes lightly opened.

"So bright…"

My body feels heavy for some reason. I might have overslept.
The birds are chirping pii pii.
There are no sparrows in this world, so you don't hear chuunchuun first thing in the morning.

"Morning."

I could see a pair of tiredly narrowed cobalt eyes right in front of me.

"…?"

Why is he here? And moreover, he's not wearing a shir-… Ah.
Right.

"UWAHHHHHHHHHH-!"

I just recalled it!
I …last night.

"HA, HAWAWAWAWA,"

"Could you not scream right in my ear first thing in the morning?"

Even though he threw abusive words at me, Achille's voice was sweet.

"Um, umm-…"

Unable to hide my unrest, I bolted upright.

"- …Camille, I can see."

"! …Hyah-"

I forgot! Right now I'm not wearing anything either. I flusteredly dove back under the feather quilt.

"You're being too agitated."

"You're being too calm. I'm kind of getting the feeling that for a while now I've been getting flustered on my own, but…"

With an expression that seemed like it could melt anything, Achille pulled me into a hug.
Fuwahh… So Achille can make expressions like this too. Seeing this expression I wasn't used to on my childhood friend, my face was just about boiling.

"There's no way that I'm calm, you know? Even now."

Being I was glued to him in a hug, I could tell from his beating heart what he was actually feeling. I get the feeling that it's beating a little faster than usual.

"Ah-, Achille."

"Huhu… Camille, you were cute last night, you know."

"Fugoh-!"

There's definitely no mistake that my heart is thumping wildly enough that we can't even compare. Stuck together like this, it's probably completely obvious to Achille too. Uuu, it's embarassing…

"I'll be going to work at lunch today, so we can stay like this a bit longer, right?"

Like that, Achille showed no signs of parting the arms he had wrapped around me.

"Um, Achille. I'd like to get changed, but…"

"Why?"

"Well, I mean…"

Seeing me try to break out of his arms, he gave me a teasing grin.

"If you're feeling that cold, how about I warm you up?"

"Eh-…? T-, That's not- …Nn-!"

In the end, my wish to leave Achille's bed didn't come true until after lunch.

Chapter 17 - J of Hearts (Part 1)

"Achille~♪ Congratulations on losing your vir■■■ity~"

"Pff-…"

I almost spat out the black tea I was drinking by accident. What a thing to start the conversation with, Your Highness!
It was a blessing that there was nobody else around.

After getting to my workplace, just as I was about to begin with, His Highness intruded on me.
He's grinning form ear to ear.
Since it's him, I knew that he would appear before long, but… he's unexpectedly fast, huh?

"…You are getting in the way of my work, but is there anything you need…? If not, then please leave."

"Getting shy? Was it that great? Camille's first-…"

"Miss Beatrix. Shall I reveal to her about how you stalked her, Your Highness?"

"…-!"

His Highness shut his mouth in a fluster.
Hard to imagine from his sparkling appearance, he loves gossip.
The gossip within the castle is one of his favourite things, and occasionally he grasps hold of some ridiculously crazy information.

But, Camille was cute last night. Incredibly cute.
Having her turn bright red, and asking for it with her raspberry eyes moist with tears was honestly… Ah-, crap. I was supposed to be in the middle of working.
I frantically stilled my loosening expression.

"Is Camille off work today?"

"Yes. I don't want her overdoing it today."

"Ohhh?"

His Highness smirked happily.
Thanks to his preparations behind the scenes, I was able to marry Camille without a problem.
Because of that, I'm thankful to him… but, it seems like I'm going to be seen through in various ways, so I'm feeling a little complicated about it.

※

"And so you see, since Beatrix is coming, I thought I'd hold my engagement party."

His Highness' fiancée, a Count's daughter, Beatrix Tapas, from the neighbouring country, was presently on her way to castle.
Apparently she's riding in a palanquin, in the middle of an exaggerated bridal procession.

I was thinking that it would've been fine even if they just avoided all the annoying steps and took a teleportation circle here, but Topageria probably has its own pretentions and customs and various annoying things.
They decided to pick teleporting to the capital, and then donig their old fashioned procession from there.

"Your Highness, though the inside of the castle is better than before, it is still not perfect…"

"Yeah, I still haven't finished cleaning. That's why I'm planning on cleaning up the remaining garbage at the engagement party."

His Highness intends on dragging out to the engagement party, those nobles who he hasn't been able to get a good hold of thus far.

"Even though you know that it might put Miss Beatrix in danger, you will still say such things?"

Moreover, there'll be a huge crowd of people attending.
If possible, I'd prefer there not to be any problems.

"I want to hurry it up. This isn't the time for the castle to be disagreeing with each other after all, and I want it to calm down quickly so that we can turn our gazes outside."

Certainly, the remnants of the extremists who are hiding outside the country are a worry. I understand what His Highness is trying to say as well.

"Understood. Anyway, Miss Beatrix was supposed to be arriving soon, wasn't she?"

"Mmn. She's heading here now. She's supposed to arrive at night. "

His Highness is in a good mood.
Well, as for me, as long as my workload doesn't increase, I'm fine either way though.

"And so, I'd like you to lend me Camille tonight. She's on good terms with Beatrix, isn't she? I'm sure Beatrix will be uneasy in a new environment too, so I was thinking about giving her somebody to talk to."

Damn him. It looks like he's thinking of using Camille as a buffering agent with his fiancée.

"I refuse. Did you intend on calling Camille here on her rest day?"

"You're refusing for another reason, right? That's so unfair. Having it so that only you get to get all clingy with your wife."

Certainly, I'm planning on playing with Camille once I get home today.
If you understand, then don't give out unreasonable orders, please.

"I'll be getting busy soon, so I will have to begin staying overnight at the castle. Please let me go home for tonight, at least."

"Ehhh, come on. I'll give you a good room you can share with Camille, so you can just flirt all you like there, can't you? She'll be getting busy soon as well, right? You two can just use the same room."

"I do not think it is a good idea to mix business and pleasure."

“Either way, once Camille becomes my bodyguard, she’ll be staying at the castle anyway, righttt? Sorry, Achille.”

Clad in a sparkling aura, His Highness smiled sweetly at me.

snap…

“Ah.”

Crap, I clenched my fist too hard and my pen broke.
I flusteredly used restoration magic to repair it.

“Well then, that’s how it’ll be.”

Letting out refreshingness all over the place with a smile, His Highmess prepared communication magic.
He probably plans on contacting Camille directly.
And Camille would never refuse a request from His Highness.

snap…

“Ah.”

It broke again.

※

“Royce-sama~ Good evening!”

Having arrived at the castle, Camille waved at His Highness with a smile.

I was wondering whether or not to restrain my cheating wife, but after that, she immediately ran to my side.
Perhaps because of what happened this morning, once she was by my side, she couldn’t calm down at all and began to fidget… So cute.

After taking Camille’s small hand, I found that it was surprisingly cold.

“Did you come by air?”

“Mn, it’s faster that way, isn’t it?”

“You’ll get cold outside, so you need to wear warmer clothing than this, right?”

“Sorry, sooorry. It was a call from Royce-sama, so I was in a rush, you see.”

“…”

I was relieved that there wasn’t a pen in my hand.
To think that I was this narrow-minded a person… It’s quite late, but I only just realised.
Various things that I’d been suppressing seemed like they would going to explode all at once.

Because the issue with Miss Beatrix was something arranged in secret, we’re all moving to His

Highness' room first.

"…And so you see, so that Beatrix gets used to this place, I'd like you to help out, Camille."

"Understood. It would be good if you could quickly get along with her, wouldn't it, Royce-sama?"

"Yeah…"

To the reply of his airheaded subordinate, His Highness agreed in a slightly depressed tone.
It's His Highness who took a highly calculated and overbearing approach to this, but it seems that he's worrying about Miss Beatrix in his own way.
As much as possible, I'd like to help His Highness.

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